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## Looking back, moving forward

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# Looking Back, Moving Forward: Reflections on the Developments in the Field of *Quality and Integrity of Governance*

## Permanent Study Group 7: Quality and Integrity of Governance

*Michael Macaulay and Gjalt de Graaf*

### 17.1 INTRODUCTION

The year 2015 marks the twelfth anniversary of the creation of the EGPA PSG 7 *Quality and Integrity of Governance*. During its life so far, it has been at the heart of significant change: to itself (the PSG was originally titled *Ethics and Integrity of Governance*), to its scope (broadening the discussions on governance from European to global levels), and to the field

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itself. This latter area has seen perhaps the most significant contribution of the PSG. In purely material terms the group has published broadly in leading international journals, which we will discuss below. Conceptually we hope that we have had a lasting impact not only on the areas and themes that have evolved in our field, but also on the methodologies that are used and the theoretical precepts that have been developed. Yet despite such dynamism the PSG has remained steadfast in its commitment to its initial aims. Like a benevolent shark we are always moving but have retained the DNA of our core identity and values.

What have been the main changes in the field of *Quality and Integrity of Governance*?

Our story begins with a quartet of wonderful thinkers: Jeroen Maesschalck (University of Leuven, Belgium, co-chair of the study group), Leo Huberts (VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands, co-chair of the study group), Nathalie Behnke (Fern Universität Hagen, Germany) and Emile Kolthoff (VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands), who all got together at a meeting of the American Society for Public Administration in 2002. They have told their origin tale before and it is worth quoting here:

*One early morning in March 2002, three of us were invited at a breakfast organised by the ASPA Ethics Section at the annual meeting of ASPA in Phoenix. In spite of the early hour, we were very impressed. First of all, we were impressed by the kind hospitality of Carole Jurkiewicz and all the other Section members, who kindly welcomed us at the breakfast and actively involved us in the meeting. This article is a good opportunity to thank them. At the same time, we were also very impressed by the strength of the American network around the subject matter of "administrative ethics." We realized that "administrative ethics" was not only an important strand in the American public administration literature, but that it also amounts to a strong "real life" network of academics, all interested in the same subject matter.*

*Admittedly, we witnessed this with some envy. Europe has a very rich and diverse administrative history in which values play a crucial role. In addition, in many European countries PA-scholars have paid considerable attention to administrative ethics, and in recent years a number of initiatives emerged to bring together European academics and practitioners interested in the topic. However, in our opinion, none of these venues amounts to an equivalent of the ASPA Ethics Section. (Maesschalck et al. 2003)*

The aims of the proposed study group were simple:

1. To establish a European network on ethics and integrity
2. To set up a systematic and close co-operation with other networks both within and outside Europe
3. To establish “public ethics and integrity” as an important area of public administration research in Europe
4. To provide research-based advice to practitioners and stimulate the dialogue between academics and practitioners
5. To stimulate and facilitate comparative international research projects between participating researchers, using the opportunities available (e.g. European funding)

And the very first EGPA conference in which the PSG participated, Lisbon 2003, demonstrated that it was going to more than live up to its intent. The inaugural meeting attracted scholars not only from across Europe (Serbia, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, the Netherlands, Belgium, the UK and of course Portugal) but from around the world, with several representatives from the USA and other jurisdictions, including Israel. As the years have progressed, the PSG family has become ever wider and now regularly welcomes participants from Asia, Australasia and Africa every year.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the diversity of themes in the inaugural PSG meeting showed not only that the instincts of its founders were correct—that there was indeed a significant need for a focussed arena in which to study integrity and governance—but that the different perspectives on ethics and integrity of governance were perhaps even more substantial than anybody had initially predicted.

The range of papers can be categorised in a number of different contributory fields. First there was a stream of conceptual and theoretical approaches with discussions on, for example, the public accountability, the public values universe; and the nature of corruption. There was also a smattering of specific case studies, which gave empirical weight to discussions on civil servants, the police and ethical leadership in action. Most overwhelmingly, but perhaps least surprisingly, was the sense of placing a stake in the ground and marking out what the territory was going to be.

There was a major emphasis on the “state of the art”—what the major issues were, what approaches could be used to tackle them, what current research was telling us and essentially how we could move forward.

The following year, in beautiful Ljubljana, saw a deepening of these themes. In particular, there was a dual direction of a greater number of empirical cases; and a more philosophical approach to theory, with papers on virtue, on trust and on communicative ethics. Bern, 2005, saw a broadening of the evidence based and a distinct turn towards the comparative with cases from across Europe and (again) from the US. Here the PSG started to ask a different set of questions: what is the value of context-specific cases for comparative approaches? What, exactly, are we trying to compare? This led to further discussions about the tools, measures and frameworks we most frequently employ and cite (e.g. corruption indices, national integrity system assessments etc.) and not only acknowledging the insights that these offer but also reflecting honestly on the limits that these tools also place around our research.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the next few meetings (Milan, 2006; Madrid, 2007 and Rotterdam, 2008) were dominated by methodological considerations. Papers returned to the comparative debate and there was a quest for new methods in studying corruption, in classifying integrity violations and perhaps most significantly in moving downwards towards subsidiarity, and attempting to chart new methodologies for analysing ethics and integrity of governance at the regional, local and community levels. As we will see below, the debates arising out of these years led to major publications that still resonate today.

As we approached the end of one decade and the beginning of the next, the meetings in Malta (2009) and Toulouse (2010) saw a retrenchment and a reassessment of what we needed to do as researchers and what we could achieve as practitioners in the field of ethics and integrity of governance. Some interesting approaches were broached for the first time, including the use of historical analytical techniques that led to a fascinating (and ongoing) conversation about collective learning and how we incorporate and respond to the lessons of the past. Simultaneously some new and innovative approaches were also brought to the table including new qualitative frameworks, the role of symbolism and the appearance of “fuzzy sets” as a means of creating a more strongly system-based approach to integrity systems.

Bucharest 2011 is fondly remembered by many members of the PSG as the greatest of all EGPA meetings, and what was truly inspirational was the emphasis on younger-career researchers who brought a passion and commitment to the conference that was infectious to all. It was no coincidence that our member Andreea Nastase won the best PhD paper award that year. Bucharest witnessed perhaps the most explicit example of the PSG's ability to remain true to itself while expanding into new terrain, managing to grow out of a combination of honest reflection, innovative thinking and serious scholarship. Here we had to relearn what we had taken for granted and, in some cases, to embrace some rather uncomfortable home truths. There were astonishing papers on academic integrity violations in the university sector, on a complete reimagining of the notion of cynicism and on the mediating impact of trust on citizens' perception of integrity. Again there was an emphasis on new methodological directions, this time incorporating auto-ethnography, and as ever there was substantial debate on empirical cases relating to transparency, national and local integrity, and the myriad forms and causes of corruption.

Bergen (2012) and Edinburgh (2013) produced more fine papers on conceptual and theoretical endeavours in our field, but also saw a shift towards the cut and thrust of integrity at the managerial level: towards the reality of performance management, the lived experiences of integrity clashes in public-private-partnerships (PPPs), managing conflicts of interest, and the depth and breadth of training and development needs for public officials. While such themes had been touched upon several times in previous meetings there was a notable traction here towards a more considered and focussed approach to these messy matters of governance. The methodological innovations continued as well with our first explicit papers in psychology and law. Perhaps it was a coincidence but this move was reflected in the renaming of the PSG to the *Quality and Integrity of Governance*, and quality was very much to the fore in both these meetings.

The quality of governance aspect remained getting much attention in Speyer (2014) and Toulouse (2015). In both cities we had special sessions on Good Governance, including legal scholars who attended for the first time. Speyer will also be remembered for a special book project our American colleagues brought in, on the theme "Legal, but Corrupt". This

continued to attract papers in Toulouse. Also notable in Toulouse was a special session in the integrity of academic education, just as the relatively large share of South-African papers. The Study Group has always had a truly international appeal.

So looking back what, if any, has been the direction of travel? We feel that our field has evolved in a number of distinct, but interlocking, ways. First there has been a significant shift in the adoption of new methodologies, and the use of new methods. In part this is a reflection of the interdisciplinary nature of ethics, integrity and governance, which requires a fluidity and flexibility of methodological approaches. Perhaps, though, it is also an indication of how innovative our field has become in the last twelve years: we appreciate that although we build on the previous foundations of our academic family there remains gaps that will perhaps never be filled unless we develop new material to build with. As such our methods have moved from, primarily, cases into widely differing methodological milieus: experimental psychology, legal studies, history, Q-methodology and many others. The field has substantially broadened its horizons into how it investigates problems.

In so doing, the field has also moved into new epistemological areas, and has developed a range of different techniques for trying to be more precise about what we can know about ethics, integrity and governance. New models, frameworks and instruments have been developed to try and give us a more accurate picture. This is reflected in the development of the empirical work in the field. Comparative analysis is even more to the fore, and this has extended jurisdictional ranges from national to sub-national. Perhaps the clearest example of this is in the still-burgeoning interest in local integrity. When the PSG was first formed, there was no conception of a local integrity system (national models were still in their relative infancy) and now there are substantial methodologies created for measuring and demonstrating such systems. It is not an exaggeration to say that this development has been strongly driven by the PSG.

Finally there has been a slightly more circular direction of travel around the big ontological questions in the field. What does doing good look like and in what contexts? What is the public good? How far can we extend integrity into other areas? This last question is one that truly sums up the evolution of the field and the PSG—in acknowledging that governance is about quality as it is about integrity and that, ultimately, the two cannot

be distinguished too clearly. We suspect that this will remain the direction of travel for a few more years, a subject we will return to below at the conclusion of this chapter.

### *17.1.1 What Has Been the Contribution/Impact of EGPA on These Changes?*

The contribution of the PSG has been substantial in a number of ways. This section will highlight two key areas of impact: (1) additional networks and events that have developed from EGPA, and (2) specific publications that have resulted from the EGPA meetings.

#### *Additional Events and Broader Networks*

As we have seen one of the stated aims of the PSG was to foster “systematic and close co-operation with other networks” and we have certainly done that. In terms of collaboration on events there are a number of important developments:

- 2005: The first Transatlantic Dialogue on ethics and integrity, University of Leuven, Belgium (in partnership with the Ethics Section of the American Society of Public Administration)
- 2007: Transatlantic Workshop on ethics and integrity, University of Maryland, US (in partnership with the Ethics Section of the American Society of Public Administration)
- 2009: First Global Dialogue on ethics and integrity, VU University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands (in partnership with the Ethics Section of the American Society of Public Administration)
- 2012: Special Panel on Governance and Integrity, *International Research Society for Public Management*, Tor Vergata University, Rome, Italy

More recently the emphasis has moved from events to a more semi-permanent collaboration with the Ethics Section of American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and other international partners. In Lausanne, in July 2012, our co-founder Huberts co-founded a new International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) study group on Quality of Governance. This group had several meetings at IIAS conference, but also during ASPA and EGPA (Toulouse) conferences.



### *Publications*

The PSG can be (and is) proud of track record in publications as it has produced a prodigious amount of high-quality work in high-impact journals, along with a number of books. These include:

- De Graaf, G., Van der Wal, Z., & Van Monfort, C. (Eds.). (2014). Symposium Issue on Good Governance. *Public Administration Review*, 74(1), 27–126.
- De Graaf, G., & Macaulay, M. (Eds.). (2014). Special Issue on Local Integrity Systems. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 37(2).
- Kolthoff, E., Macaulay, M., & Anechiarico, F. (Eds.). (2013). Special Issue on Ethics: Integrity Systems for Safeguarding Ethics and Integrity of Governance. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 79(4).
- Van der Wal, Z., de Graaf, G., & Lawton, A. (Eds.). (2011). Special Issue Competing Values in Public Management. *Public Management Review*, 13(3), 331–477.
- Van der Wal, Z., & de Graaf, G. (Eds.). (2010). Governing Good and Governing Well. *Symposium American Review of Public Administration*, 40(6), 623–760.
- Cox III, R. (Ed.). (2009). *Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration: cases and concepts*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.
- De Graaf, G., & van der Wal, Z. (Eds.). (2009). Symposium: Research Methods in Administrative Ethics. Perspectives and Techniques. *Public Integrity*, 11(1).
- Huberts, L. W. J. C., Maesschalck, J., & Jurkiewicz, C. J. (Eds.). (2008). *Ethics and Integrity of Governance: Perspectives across Frontiers*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Maesschalck, J., Jurkiewicz, C. J., & Huberts, L. (Eds.). (2007–2008). Symposium: ‘Transnational Perspectives on Public Sector Ethics’. *Public Integrity*, 10(1).
- Behnke, N., & Maesschalck, J. (Eds.). (2006–2007). *Symposium: ‘Integrity Systems at Work—Theoretical and Empirical Foundations’* Parts I, II and III. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 30(3 & 4), 31 (1).

Here you can see the extent to which the developments in the field have been influenced by the PSG: there are special issues on local integrity, on methodological advances and, always, with a comparative approach.

We fully admit that like most academic networks we may not have changed the world, but through our extensive publication record, the PSG has explicitly grown the debate in several new and interesting directions.

***17.1.2 What Will Quality and Integrity of Governance Look Like in Ten Years, and More, from Now? And What Can Be the Role of the PSG in Contributing to Shape the Future?***

None of us are oracles and we cannot predict with any certainty what lies ahead. What we do know is that if the previous twelve years are anything to go by then the field of integrity and governance will continue to surprise. Clearly there will remain a core set of research questions to which we will attend: the big normative questions (what is good governance?); the empirical epistemological questions (what can we learn from X and how can we transfer this learning?); the methodology questions (what is our most effective method?). We will always have our core themes of anti-corruption, ethical conduct, integrity systems (at all levels) to contend with.

Yet what is interesting to ponder is the extent to which new avenues of enquiry are emerging. Arguably the trend isn't for our field to expand into others, but that others have recognised that our field is an intrinsic part of theirs. One example of this phenomenon is the move towards outcomes-based public management: the integrity needed to develop sustainable and fair outcomes cannot be removed from the quality of the outcomes themselves. The selection of outcomes, therefore, along with the means by which we try and achieve them; and the methods we use to measure them and their impacts are all up for grabs—and these are precisely the questions to which our field can provide guidance and research leadership.

Public management and policy both continue to evolve in new and interesting ways, from traditional public administration, through the years of New Public Management and onto new forms of public governance. Remaining at the heart of each of these manifestations, however, is the concept of public ethics. The practice of governance is conducted against a backdrop of very broad social, political and economic developments, such as individualisation, globalisation and information technology. Society, and also its formal institutions, becomes more and more

differentiated. In these transformational times, we see both the realignment of social structures and an increasing institutional complexity; hybridisation and collaboration are becoming increasingly the norm while more formal institutional arrangements wither. This has major implications for government: society asks for new governance arrangements. Inevitably such developments have a direct influence on the ethics of governance and value conflicts. With the diffusion of the boundaries between state and society what happens to traditional public values like integrity, democracy, accountability, transparency or honesty? Do these need to be reconsidered or reclaimed? What values can or should mediate the new relationships between citizen and state? With increasingly diverse forms of public participation is it time to rethink the notion of democratic legitimacy in public ethics? And how resilient are ethics policies and public management? We are preparing a Symposium issue in *Public Administration Review* on these questions.

What is also interesting is to see how integrity develops at the supra- and sub-national levels. We can already see this twin approach being used in a number of agencies: Transparency International, for example, continues to grow its research both beyond the nation state and within it. Perhaps more overt still is the rise of initiatives such as the *Open Government Partnership* (OGP), which since its inception in 2012 has already grown from eight founding member states to sixty-four members and counting.

What is interesting about the OGP and similar initiatives is the emphasis it places on local and community participation through an active Civil Society. The countries that have had the most impactful OGP commitments (Georgia, the Philippines, Indonesia) are those that have empowered citizens to take the lead. The more government-led and reactive members (such as New Zealand) have been less acclaimed.

Perhaps of even greater importance, though, is that this type of approach re-emphasises that quality and integrity are inseparable for governance. As we continue to move away from prescriptive models in public administration, towards a more fluid governance-style where solutions and ideas emerge, then we need to recognise that there is nothing other than grey areas to navigate through.

Similarly the trend towards ever-expanding forms of collaboration and externalisation, as well the evolution of hybrid organisations, all has a potentially significant impact on our field. When the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), for example, has been shown to outsource its interrogation programmes to private contractors, it is up to the likes of our PSG to

respond. Discussions on Public Value (as opposed to public *values*) cannot ignore the moral imperatives behind them: who creates value and who really judges when it has been attained?

In truth there are few, if any, areas of public policy, management and administration that do not have some connection to the quality and integrity of governance. What will be interesting in the next ten years will not only be the destinations we try and reach in our research but the journey itself: who we will collaborate with and what new synthesis of fields we will forge. What is exciting is that as governance becomes increasingly blurred, the capacity for inter-disciplinary and innovative approaches increases exponentially. It is up to our PSG, and EGPA in the entirety of its community, to remain at the spearhead of this path.